THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government of India have taken a decision regarding free distribution of foodgrains to the poor old people by implementing the 'Annapurna Scheme'. The Scheme has since been launched with effect from 1st April, 2000.

(b) The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, (Department of Food and Public Distribution) has allocated 1.65 lakh MT of foodgrains during the current financial year.

(c) Only the State of Andhra Pradesh has lifted so far 1133 MT of rice during June and July, 2000.

(d) and (e) The State of Gujarat is also covered under the Annapurna Scheme within the overall quantity of foodgrains allotted. No lifting of foodgrains has so far taken place in the State.

Import of Edible Oil

1299. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantities of edible oils and Palmolein oil imported in the country during last three years;

(b) to what extent these imports have affected the growers in the country; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to boost the edible oil exports from the country or to improve the life of the growers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) The quantities of edible oils and palmolein imported during the last three years are as under:—

Qty. in lakh tonnes

Year (Nov-Oct)	Edible Oils	Palmolein(RBD)
1997-98	20.83	14.70
1998-99	43.93	26.77
1999-2000 (till June)	25.58	14.58

(b) and (c) Import of edible oils is now under OGL on account of the big gap between demand and supply in the country, which is roughly estimated to be around 30 lakh tonnes. Export of oil in such a context cannot be considered feasible, especially in view of the higher domestic cost *vis-a-vis* international prices. Keeping in view the long-term goal towards attaining as high a degree of self-sufficiency as possible in the edible oil sector, Government have initiated a number of steps recently. These are—

(i) With effect from 12th June, 2000, the duty on raw-oils has been raised from 15% (basic) to 25% (basic). The duty on refined oils has been raised from 25% (basic) to 35% (basic). Duty on other oils has been raised to 45% (basic).

(ii) Use of indigenous oils to a minimum of 25% of the oil-mix in the manufacture of vanaspati has been made mandatory w.e.f. 12th June, 2000.

(iii) W.e.f. 12th June, 2000 use of expeller mustard oil upto 30% in the manufacture of vanaspati has been allowed.

(iv) In order to support the domestic processing industry, in terms of better capacity utilization and value addition within the country as also to minimize the possibility of diversion of oils, import of edible oils at concessional rate of duty has been allowed only to the importers having their own processing facilities.

Ineffectiveness of Consumer Courts

†1300. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Consumer Courts now have become ineffective as they take very long time in delivering judgments;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what action is being taken by Government to streamline the funtioning of the Consumer Courts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Consumer Courts in the country have so far disposed 74.3% of the cases filed with them. However, the disposal of cases by the consumer

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.